

# OPEN BURNING And AIR QUALITY



**A**S THE NUMBER of people living in and adjacent to wildlands grows, the number of homes potentially threatened by wildfire also grows. Homeowners creating fire resistant areas around structures in wildland areas may remove trees or tree limbs, shrubbery and other vegetation in an effort to create a “defensible space.” The resulting wood waste is often chipped, composted, or landfilled. Some homeowners, however, may choose to conduct open burning to eliminate excess wood waste.

UNFORTUNATELY, BURNING WOOD waste generates smoke which may create or contribute to poor air quality. For some individuals, smoke is merely a nuisance, but for others, smoke is a dangerous pollutant triggering serious respiratory problems. The Department of Environmental Quality (Department) regulates smoke emissions from open burning to prevent and/or reduce air quality impacts. The Department’s rules provide direction for homeowners conducting open burning.

BURNING WOOD WASTE from the average home is defined in the Department’s rules as “minor open burning.” In Montana, minor open burning may be conducted March 1 through November 30 of each year. The months of December, January and February are typically characterized by poor air dispersion and ventilation and, with very rare exceptions, minor open burning is prohibited during that time. Burners are responsible for determining favorable conditions if they conduct burning from March 1 through August 31. The Department uses a hotline during the months of September, October and November to help burners determine favorable burning conditions.



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**BEFORE CONDUCTING OPEN burning of excess wood waste, a prospective burner is required to do the following:**

- 1. During the months of September, October and November, call the Open Burning Hotline at 1-800-225-6779 to check air dispersion and ventilation conditions for your area.**
- 2. During March through August, conduct open burning only when fire danger is low and weather forecasts indicate good dispersion and ventilation conditions. Burners are responsible for the effects of their smoke emissions and may burn only during favorable conditions using burn techniques and methods to minimize air quality impacts.**
- 3. Call your local fire department to determine whether other burning restrictions are in effect.**
- 4. Call your county health department to determine whether other burning restrictions are in effect. The following counties have additional open burning regulations:**

Cascade County	454-6950
Flathead County	758-5760
Lewis & Clark County	447-8351
Lincoln County	293-7781
Butte-Silver Bow County	497-5020
Yellowstone County	256-6841
Missoula County	523-4755



- 5. Burn only wood waste from trees, shrubs, and plants. Burning garbage and other types of waste material is prohibited.**

**For the complete regulations, read the rules at Title 17, Chapter 8, subchapter 6 of the Montana Administrative Rules, available on the Department's website at:**

**[www.deq.state.mt.us/dir/legal/Chapters/CH08-06.PDF](http://www.deq.state.mt.us/dir/legal/Chapters/CH08-06.PDF)**